

NEWSIN brief

Abbott sworn in as Aussie PM



AFP, Canberra
Tony Abbott was sworn in as

Australia's new prime minister yesterday and immediately ordered the scrapping of the nation's carbon tax and the halting of asylum-seeker boats.

The 55-year-old conservative launched straight into work with a cabinet meeting after the ceremony at Government House in Canberra where his Liberal/National government officially

16 killed in Venezuela prison clash

AFP, Caracas

At least 16 people were killed in violent clashes between inmates at a Venezuelan prison, authorities and a non-governmental organization said Tuesday.

Humberto Prado, director of the Venezuelan Prison Observatory, told AFP the brawl broke out Monday in the Sabaneta jail in Maracaibo, a city in the country's northwest.

The reason behind the

Bo Xilai verdict to be issued Sunday



AFP, Beijing

The verdict in the case of fallen Chinese politician Bo Xilai will be issued on Sunday morning, the court that tried him said yesterday on its verified social media account.

The court is almost certain to find him guilty but his punishment remains in question. The charges against him mean he could be handed a death sentence, but analysts expect him to receive a

Sri Lanka editor flees after armed attack

AFP, Colombo

An editor critical of Sri Lanka's government has fled the country following death threats and an armed attack on her home which she suspected was intended to find documents, a media rights groups said yesterday.

The Free Media Movement (FMM) said Mandana Ismail Abeywickrema left for an undisclosed country Tuesday, joining some 80 journalists who have sought refuge abroad since President Mahinda Rajapakse came to power in 2005.



'OCCUPY WALL STREET' MARKS SECOND ANNIVERSARY

Wall Street participants take part in a protest to mark the movement's second anniversary in New York, yesterday. *Top right*, a participant holds a banner during the protest and *bottom right*, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman is arrested for purposefully blocking traffic. Hundreds of Occupy Wall Street participants held a march to mark the movement's anniversary.

PHOTO: AFP



Iran frees prominent political prisoners

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Iran's most prominent human rights activist was released from jail yesterday along with several other political prisoners in what appears to be the most tangible sign of change yet under the new Iranian president, Hassan Rohani.

Ahead of Rohani's eagerly awaited visit to the UN general assembly in New York next week, Nasrin Sotoudeh, who has been likened to Aung San Suu Kyi, was driven from Evin prison in Tehran to her house in another part of the Iranian capital and told she did not need to return to jail.

Opposition website Kaleme reported on Wednesday that seven other women political prisoners had also been released in the previous 24 hours, including the dissident journalist Mahsa Amrabadi, and at least four men, including reformist politicians Feizollah Arabsorkhi, Mirtaheer Mousavi and former deputy foreign minister Mohsen Aminzadeh.

"In the past, when I was granted prison



Nasrin Sotoudeh

leave they used to give me a document, this time they gave me nothing," said Sotoudeh, who last October was awarded the European parliament's most prestigious human rights award, the Sakharov prize for freedom of thought, which has previously been won by Suu Kyi and Nelson Mandela.

The prisoner releases have come amid increasing signs of a political opening-up in the Islamic republic following Rohani's inauguration last month and as he prepares for his UN visit, which many have suggested may be the scene for a historic meeting between the Iranian president and Barack Obama.

Iran's supreme leader on Tuesday struck a conciliatory tone by saying there was room for flexibility in diplomacy, which many have interpreted as his public backing for Rohani's new attempt to improve Iran's relations with the west, especially conducting direct talks with the US. Iranians, reacting on social networks, linked the releases to Khamenei's talk of "leniency" on Tuesday.

Booker Prize goes global

BBC ONLINE

Authors writing in English from all corners of the globe will be eligible for the Man Booker Prize from 2014, organisers have confirmed.

"We are abandoning the constraints of geography and national boundaries," said Jonathan Taylor, chair of the Booker Prize Foundation.

At present, the £50,000 prize only considers works by writers from the Commonwealth, Ireland or Zimbabwe.

Announcing the changes in London, the Booker Foundation said the prize now will recognise authors writing in English from all over the world.

MUZAFFARNAGAR RIOTS Arrest warrants issued against UP politicians

TNN, Muzaffarnagar/lucknow

A local court yesterday issued arrest warrants against a BSP MP, BJP and BSP MLAs, besides several politicians and senior community leaders for allegedly inciting violence through inflammatory speeches here even as some of the accused politicians denied any role in instigating violence.

The arrest warrants have been issued against 16 politicians and community leaders including BSP MP Qadir Rana, BJP MLAs Sangeet Som and Bhartendu Singh, BSP MLAs Noor Saleem and Maulana Jameel, Congress leader Saeeduzaman and BKU chief Naresh Tikait, police said.

At least two of the accused leaders appeared on television channels on Wednesday and denied any role in inciting violence.

BSP MLA Noor Saleem Rana denied that he instigated the mob and said he is ready to face investigations.

"I am ready to go to jail if I am proved guilty after probe," he told in an interview to Times Now.

Another accused MLA from the BJP Sangeet Som also denied the charges levelled by the cops.

Police have said action will be taken against guilty politicians after the probe is over.

Ten police teams have been rushed to arrest those against whom warrants have been issued, a senior official said.

The communal clashes in Muzaffarnagar and adjoining areas claimed 47 lives and displaced over 40,000 people.

US BASE SHOOTING

Mother of gunman says sorry to victims

REUTERS, Washington

The mother of Washington Navy Yard gunman Aaron Alexis apologized to the victims yesterday, and like his friends and colleagues, she too, was unable to offer any clues on his motive for the shooting.

"I don't know why he did what he did, and I'll never be able to ask him why. Aaron is now in a place where he can never do harm to anyone, and for that I am glad," Cathleen Alexis said in an audio statement. "To the families of the victims, I am so, so very sorry that this has happened. My heart is broken."

All 12 victims were civilians caught up in the shooting spree on Monday morning by the former Navy reservist who was working as an information technology contractor at the military installation.



Miss Muslimah

AFP, Jakarta

Obabiya Aishah Ajibola, a Nigerian woman tearfully prayed and recited Koranic verses as she won a beauty pageant exclusively for Muslim women in the Indonesian capital yesterday, a riposte to the Miss World contest that has sparked hardline anger.

The 20 contestants from six countries were covered from head to foot, and as well as beauty they were judged on how well they recited Quranic verses and their views on Islam in the

Residents and tourists wade through a flooded street in Acapulco, Guerrero state, Mexico as heavy rains hit the country. Mexican authorities scrambled Tuesday to launch an air lift to evacuate tens of thousands of tourists stranded amid floods in the resort of Acapulco following a pair of deadly storms that claimed 47 lives.

PHOTO: AFP



SURVEILLANCE ROW Brazil president scraps US visit

AFP, Brasilia

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff postponed a long-planned state visit to Washington on Tuesday, the most serious diplomatic fall-out yet from Edward Snowden's leak of US secrets.

While both sides couched the cancelation in diplomatic terms, it marks an embarrassment for President Barack Obama and a blow to his efforts to improve ties with the key Latin American power.

The visit had been scheduled for October 23 but was called into question after documents leaked by Snowden, a former US intelligence technician, revealed the extent of American spying on its Brazilian ally.

Obama has been trying to defuse the row, most recently during talks with Rousseff on the sidelines of this month's G20 summit, and he spoke with her again on Monday by telephone.

But Brazil was unmoved, and on Tuesday Rousseff brought an end to the speculation, confirming that her trip was off.



Indian ex-editor back on pavement

NDTV ONLINE

Nearly a month after Sunita Naik and her ageing Pomeranian couple George and Christine Misquitta, the 65-year-old former editor has returned to the footpath outside the gurdwara where MiD DAY had found her.

Citing adjustment issues and minor squabbles, Naik moved out of the Misquitta residence on Monday morning and returned to the pavement outside Sachkhand Darbar Gurdwara in Versova.

Naik, who claims to have been the editor of a prestigious Marathi magazine, had made the footpath her home for over two months - after mysteriously losing the millions she claims to have made with the sale of her two Worli apartments and cars in 2007.

Soon after her story appeared in Sunday MiD DAY, reader George Misquitta and his wife Christine decided to bring her to their apartment in Vile Parle (West), where they live along with their 10 pet dogs.

Naik maintained that she now has the confidence and energy to bounce back and lead her life with dignity.



Taliban kill senior Afghan poll official

AFP, Kunduz

Taliban assassins riding motorbikes gunned down a senior election official in northern Afghanistan yesterday, raising fears the presidential vote due in April will trigger a surge in violence.

Amanullah Aman, the head of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in Kunduz province, was killed by two gunmen outside his home in Kunduz city as he left for work.

He was the first election official to be murdered since candidate nominations opened on Monday. All potential runners in the wide-open race to succeed President Hamid Karzai must declare themselves by October 6.

"Aman was shot dead in the morning in front of his house as he was leaving for his office," Kunduz provincial spokesman Enayatullah Khaliq told AFP.

"Two men on motorcycles opened fire on his car and severely wounded him, he later died in the hospital."

Deputy police chief Ebadullah Talwar said that Aman was murdered after going grocery shopping and was not accompanied by any bodyguards. Talwar added that five arrests had already been made, but gave no further details.

The Taliban, who often target government officials, released a brief statement on their website claiming responsibility for the attack.

Nigerian army raid kills 150 Islamists

AFP, Lagos

A military strike on a Boko Haram camp in Nigeria's restive northeast last week killed 150 Islamists and 16 soldiers, an army spokesman said yesterday.

The army's claim of a major offensive against the Islamist insurgents on September 12 came after local media reported that Boko Haram had ambushed a group of soldiers in the same area, killing 40 and leaving dozens of others missing.

Military officials were not available to comment on the reported Boko Haram ambush, speaking only about the purported military strike.

Details of last week's military operation had not been previously made public.

"It was a highly fortified insurgent camp with heavy weapons in (northeastern) Borno State," an army spokesman said.

Ten shortlisted for Nobel peace prize

TNN, London

The Nobel Institute is in the final stage of choosing this year's Nobel peace prize winner, having shortlisted ten nominees out of a list of 259 that included 209 individuals and 50 organisations. The original list included 12 Indians - the second highest from a country after the US.

"We are in the finish line of choosing the Nobel peace winner," Geir Lundestad, head of the Nobel Institute, told TOI from Oslo. The winner will be announced on October 11.

"I can't reveal the names of those in the final shortlist. We will spend substantial time in reaching a consensus on who will be this year's winner," said Lundestad. "We already have had four meetings. In the next two meetings the winner will be decided."

Lundestad had earlier lamented that the "biggest mistake" in the Nobel's 112-year history was not having given the peace prize to Mahatma Gandhi. "In the 1960s itself we decided against giving peace prize posthumously. Hence it will remain our biggest mistake not to have given Gandhi the prize," he said.

The peace prize list originally included Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani schoolgirl-turned-icon who was shot by the Taliban, Myanmar's reformist president Thein Sein and former US president Bill Clinton.

US to seize Iran-owned NY skyscraper

AFP, New York City

The United States is set to seize control of a midtown Manhattan skyscraper prosecutors claim is secretly owned by Iran, the justice department said Tuesday, though the ruling is to be appealed.

The seizure and sale of the 36-story building, in the heart of New York City on Fifth Avenue, would be "the largest-ever terrorism-related forfeiture," the statement added.

A federal judge ruled in favor of the government's suit this week, saying the building's owners had violated Iran sanctions and money laundering laws.

Manhattan Federal Prosecutor Preet Bharara said the decision upholds the justice department claims the owner of the building "was (and is) a front for Bank Melli, and thus a front for the Government of Iran."

Bharara said the funds from selling the building would provide "a means of compensating victims of Iranian-sponsored terrorism."

Prosecutors allege the building's owners, the Alavi Foundation and Assa Corporation, transferred rental income and other funds to Iran's state-owned Bank Melli.

